LARRABIE'S TREE

By M. L. C. Pickthall

Story of a Strange Friendship and of Some of the Things That Money Cannot Buy.

IN THE REELING LANTERN LIGHT BRICKDALE SAW HIM SWING HIMSELF TO PARAGON'S BROAD BACK.

WHEN J. Mortimer Brickdale wished to found a country estate he bought for a song a big square of lovely wild land on the river bank above Mapletown, and said: "Let there be a house, and a garden, and stables, and a golf course—all of the most expensive variety." So surveyors and architects planned and landscape gardeners did whatever it is they do. Anyway, they cleared the tangles of wild grape and elder and burned off the sweet fern and sumach. They turned the touch-me-not swamp into a concrete basin for irises. They cut down the old hickories and straggling maples and planted exotics in neat rows. On the river bank they built what J. Mortimer Brickdale called his country cottage, and they had great difficulty with the plumbing, the land being dead level for a mile between the sides of the lovely valley. They thought of a great deal, but they couldn't think of everything. So that when J. Mortimer, looking as lonesome in his long green car as one pea in a pod, went to inspect his new estate the first thing he said was: "Why in thunder have you left that great, half-dead pine standin' just behind the house? Cut it down!"

The foreman of all the landscape gardeners looked at the tree, and he was startled. He had never realized how entirely, with the clearing of the lesser growth, it dominated the view. He said: "Well, now you come to mention it, sir, it ain't exactly elegant, but——"

"What's that?" barked J. Mortimer. "I said, 'Cut it down.'"

"I'm afraid you'll find it difficult to do that, Mr. Brickdale," said the foreman, who did not like being barked at. "That tree stands farther off than what you think. It ain't on your property."

That was the first time J. Mortimer Brickdale became aware of the existence of Mason Larrabie.

He talked a great deal about him in the next 10 minutes, and about employes who never had the interests of their employer at heart, and about squatters' rights. It seemed old Larrabie had acquired his estate by the simple expedient of living on it for years and years.

"How much of it is there?" barked J. Mortimer. "Half an acre? Quarter? Offer him two hundred, with immediate possession. And, say, see that your men have that tree right down the very day he quits."

They offered Mason Larrabie two hundred, which was not a bad price. They offered him two-fifty, three hundred, three-fifty, rising by degrees to five hundred. He refused all offers.

Brickdale went in person to offer him six hundred and to tell him what he thought of him.

He went out from the city in the green car, and he was amazed and enraged to notice from what a distance the pine tree could be seen. Long before the ornate roofing of the country cottage or the gilded vane on the stables came into view the ruin of Larrabie's pine possessed the vision. It was as hopelessly at odds with the landscape gardening as a lighthouse would have been. Last giant of the forest which once had covered the land, it carved its gaunt outline unconquerably upon the blue.

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BEYOND his new asphalt driveway the green car bucked and swung in a sandy track and stopped at a little gate. It was a homemade gate—slats and chicken netting. Brickdale got out of the car, opened the gate, and went into Larrabie's garden.

His indignant eyes took in every detail—the starveling beds where silver trumpets of the woolly convolulus grew among the tomatoes and goldenrod crowded the cabbages. Everywhere were hens, ring-straked and spotted. On the only outcrop of granite rock to be found in all that mild alluvial plain Mason Larrabie in long-past days had built his shanty, and it was a shanty still—an old and untidy one. And garden, rock and shanty alike were gripped and laced and bound together with the resinous roots of the pine. They lay in the earth everywhere, hard as red concrete where the hens had scratched them bare. They twisted among the stones like cables, and buttressed that gaunt shaft, jagged with broken branches that sprang heavenward from the shanty's very doorsill.

"Are you Mason Larrabie?"

The old man, who sat in an armchair among the twisted roots, pulled his corncob pipe out of his mouth, said "I be," and put the pipe back again. He was a shabby old man, on the verge of rags. He had eyes of a heavenly blue. These rested on J. Mortimer Brickdale with a gentle expression.

Brickdale was trying hard to be genial. He had said to his agents: "I'll have to do this job myself, I see. You don't handle these people right. You have to jolly 'em along. That's it—jolly 'em along." In accordance with this design, he opened breezily.

"See here," he said. "I guess there's been a little misunderstanding, and I've come to set it right. I've come myself. You know who I am, hey? I guess you do. I'm Brickdale. And you know what I've come about, hey? You've been trying to be a little bit too clever, hey?" He shook his finger jollily and laughed. "Well, I've come to have a little talk with you. I'm sure we can fix things up between us with a little straight talk. You're cute, I can see that. You don't like dealing through lawyers and agents, and I'm with you there. I'm straight. And I come straight to the point. What I want to know is—just friendly between you and me—what'll you take for this nice little place of yours? Fine little place! Well—six hundred, hey? What do you say to that, hey?"

Mason Larrabie slowly removed his corncob pipe.

"I'll say to that," he answered mildly, "what Cousin Steve Larrabie's sister Jane said to the book agent when he come courtin'."

"What's that?"

"'Scat, young fellow!'" said Mason Larrabie, and once more corked himself with his pipe.

Brickdale kept a tight hold on himself.

"If you won't take a good offer like that," he said as casually as he could, "you're the loser. They're—he choked—"they're generous terms. I won't raise 'em."

"I ben't askin' you to, be I?"

"See here," Brickdale tried again. "If you won't sell the land, what will you take for that tree, hey?"

"What do you want o' my tree?"

"It spoils my view. I want to cut it down. I'll give you——"

He backed, suddenly silent. Mason Larrabie had risen from his chair. He seemed to tower over the rich man as his tree towered over the rich man's land. He raised his hands, wagging them slowly at the astonished Mr. Brickdale.

"You?" he began softly. "You wanter cut my tree down? Why, that tree was a tree when yore grandfather come out o' the emigrant ship carryin' his property in a borrered handkerchieve! And it'll be standin' when what's left o' you's spilin' a vase in a fash'nable crematorium. There ain't another like it in a hundred mile! You offer me fer it?" He moved down on Brickdale, his eyes gleaming. "Offer me all you got, you pore mushroom in pants, and"—the passion faded from his face; once more he was serene—"and I'll say to you what Cousin Steve Larrabie's sister Jane ses to the undertaker when he comes to arrange fer the funeral afore she was rightly deceased. 'Ye're a mite hasty, Mr. Mellin. Good afternoon,' she ses."

He seated himself once more and smiled gently at Mr. Brickdale.

"You'll regret this!" said Brickdale as soon as he could speak, and went away hastily. He had never been so affronted as by this old vagabond and his intolerable tree.

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HE moved into his country cottage in due time, and the tree worried him from the first. From the lower branches Larrabie's hens launched themselves intrepidly to scratch in his new strawberry beds. A pair of horned owls dwelt there, too. They spared their landlord's straggling chicks, but carried off all Brickdale's prize Wyandottes. As time went on his dislike of the tree became one of those strange, nervous obsessions which fret a man's sense of proportion to powder as a beetle gnaws a timber to dust. He could not explain to himself why it bulked so large in his mental as well as his material skies. It ruled his horizons. In some obscure way it humiliated him. He was through it made aware of some vast, still spirit at war with him and his. At every sunset its shadow, stark as a cross, sprang clear across his golf course, and he cursed at the darkening bunker because he wasn't allowed to forget the thing even when he had his back to it.

He was not a bad man, but he would descend to anything under continuously applied nervous irritation. There was a doubt—a possibility—squatters' rights were not always very sound.

He went into the city in the green car with a mumbled order to the chauffeur. The man caught the word "lawyers," but when he would have stopped at the doors of the firm who did most of Brickdale's business his master barked at him: "What you stoppin' here for? I said West & Roddy, Lake avenue." West & Roddy were but a dirty firm, and it was but a dirty job Brickdale was taking them.

They worked underground, like moles, fattening on mistakes and neglects and misconceptions. With some shame Brickdale left them to it. It seemed he had a very good case.

Things were not going too well with the estate. It was a very wet Autumn, and the river crept inch by inch up the level of the herbaceous borders, dribbled into the cellars and turned the golf course into a puddle. Day followed day of gray and driving wet. Wet winds whipped the rotting leaves from Brickdale's exotics, nipped his tender roses, splashed mud upon his plate-glass windows. The impudence of nature surprised him. The pine was a shadow, moaning day and night with the voices of desolation. He hated it with a personal hatred.

Meanwhile the moles were busy. One morning Brickdale looked up from the papers on his great library table and saw through the window old Mason Larrabie coming up the new gravel drive, clasping another paper to the breast of his shabby coat.

Brickdale's soul was not yet stifled in him. He felt a qualm, an impulse to hide. But Larrabie was in the room, as if he had been a leaf blown in by the wind. He looked thin as a leaf. The rain had sleeked the white hair close to his head, for he wore no hat. His blue eyes had the unseeing look of the blind. He went to Brickdale's table and laid upon it the paper he had carried. It was a letter. It was splashed with rain, as though some one had wept over it.

"This——" He hesitated. His voice failed him. He looked very old. "This here," he began again, "come to me a while ago. I dunno that I rightly take it all in. But the meat of it's this: I ain't no legal claim to 'bout half the land I'm livin' on. Is that so?"

"Oh, not half," said Brickdale smoothly. "Not so much as that, Mr. Larrabie. About fifty feet on the south side."

"So you know all about it?" returned the old man swiftly. A spark was waking in his blue eyes. But Brickdale met them hardly enough.

"I know about it. I had the records examined and a fresh survey made. I warned you. Your land——"

Larrabie swept the words aside with a slow gesture, which in some way reminded Brickdale of the movement of the pine in the wind.

"There's a lot here," he said, touching the letter, "which I ain't got clear yet—about boundaries and registrations, and fences, and settlers' rights—it don't matter. Seems I ain't done a lot o' things I'd oughter have done. But till you come there was no one wanted my land, anyway. It ain't worth much. Seems as if a strip of it belongs rightly to your property. Is that so?"

"That's so. There's no doubt of it. But you're at liberty to fight me through every court in the land."

"I ain't no money to fight you, an' you know it. But it don't matter. There's other things to fight you with besides money, though you ain't learned it yet. Well, what I come to ask you's this: My tree stands on the fifty-foot strip you're grabbing. You know that?"

"I know it." Brickdale was almost good-humored. He thought the old fellow was coming to terms, that Larrabie would save him from doing a thing he didn't like doing. "You'd have done better to take my offer in the first place, hey?"

"No," said the old man steadily. "I'd have done worse. So you're takin' my land just so's you can lop my tree down?"

"I don't want the land you're occupying," said Brickdale hastily, "but that ugly, great tree's comin' down or I'll know the reason why. See here! Can't you show some sense? Give me leave to buy that tree for firewood—at a fancy price—and this here"—he tapped the letter—"all this business shall go into the waste basket and no more said. See?"

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MASON LARRABIE did not see. He was not listening. He was gazing through the plate-glass window at the pine.

He knew his tree in every mood and aspect, as a man knows the woman he loves. He knew it when in the dawn it seemed to be again of some substance tender with growth; he knew it high against the noon; he knew it softened against an infinity of stars. In Spring he would lay his ear to it lovingly and fancy that he heard the sap rising through the great shaft, hard as stone, that yet responded in new tassels delicate as green foam. He received from it a hundred divine, dumb assurances, the yorn old man from the worn old tree. And it was to be taken from him—cut down.

"Not while I live," he said aloud. He turned to Brickdale with a face of white passion. The rich man was aware again of a spirit at war with him and his. For an instant it almost seemed it was the tree threatening him. "Brickdale," cried the old man, "if the land from here to Labrador was yore own, still you've no right to tech that tree!"

"Then you won't come to terms?"

"With you? We'll fight you while we stand—me an' my tree!"

"Then I've no more to say. You're crazy! Get out!"

Brickdale turned away contemptuously, but some look in the old man's face held him.

"We've got more to say to you before we're done!" said Larrabie under his breath, and for a flash Brickdale shrank as if from some weight ready to fall on him. Then there was only an old man walking down the drive, swayed by the wind and the rain.

Whatever else there was of law business Brickdale hastened on. Larrabie opposed nothing. He had no case and no money to build a case. Haled once or twice to the city, he was nothing but a confused, ignorant old countryman. He spent all his days sitting at the door of the shack, staring at the doomed tree, dripping in the endless rain. It was his brother, in that it had been long ago of the homely soil and went heavenward. The rare clear nights saw him standing hour long in its austere shadow, his cheek laid to the cold bark, shuddering as if the cross-cut saws would be laid to the roots of his own life as well.

"Cut you down, my beauty?" he mumbled. "Not while I'm here they shan't."

What could he do—one weak, silly old man? He didn't know. But over him the dark, aged boughs sighed out some tremendous breath of comfort, some word too vast for him to comprehend.

The rains continued, a sullen torrent by day, by night a slate-colored drive across the white frost-moon. Brickdale's establishment suffered from colds and rheumatism. He began to think of leaving his country cottage for his apartments in the city. But first he wanted to get the tree cut down and done with.

A new wire fence, running along the revised boundary line, severed Mason Larrabie from his tree, but he and the hens disregarded it. He seemed to be always beneath it, haggardly waiting for the final tragedy. He made Brickdale uncomfortable with his silence and his resistance. Brickdale was alone now, living in two rooms of his country cottage. The other servants had been sent back to the city. Only a groom remained to light fires, feed his master with tinned foods and care for the two overfed horses in the denuded stable, which were to convey Brickdale to the city in two days' time. In two days the tree was to come down. Brickdale sighed with relief when he saw a lorry splashing through the floods, laden with ropes, ladders, saws, axes and a couple of men in oilskins, who spat disconsolately as they viewed the pine tree.

"Some job," they said. "Who's the old feller leanin' against the trunk? He looks sick."

But no one answered them as Mason Larrabie crept away into his shanty and shut the door.

"We'll be back on time tomorrer," they said, "if the weather lets us through."

Brickdale told them that they must be back tomorrow and complete the job, weather or no weather. A gust of wind, taking the pine as he spoke to them, showered him with drops so cold that they stung like bullets. He swore and went into his house. He went to bed early and dreamed that he was in a sinking ship and that the waves were going over him.

He woke some hours later, breathlessly alert. What had roused him he did not know. The darkness was full of an uneasy sense of movement. It was as if hundreds of unseen hands were fingering the house, pushing it, squeezing it. Creaks and complaints came from walls and floors. In Brickdale's mind lingered the memory of a crash heard in sleep. He lay bewildered, feeling a vibration crawl through the springs of the bed beneath him. He could hear the rain, a steady drive on the roof, as it had driven for hours and for days. A deeper note was added to it, and as he listened something struck the house. He felt it. It struck silently, yet with such force that for one reeling instant he fancied the dark, square of his bedroom had lifted and settled again like a ship. Then, from outside, rain and darkness were split by a wild, inhuman cry.

It was a cry that hooked Brickdale out of bed as a line hooks a perch out of a pool. He was shaking so that he could scarcely find the button of the electric light. He pressed it at last, pressed it till it broke, but no light followed. He spring to the window, a vague gray square in the darkness, and flung up the blind.

His first thought when his eyes were cleared to the gloom was the confused one that he had somehow gone to bed on the ground floor. A gray level stretched a few feet below him, pitted and ruffled with the unceasing rain. He could recognize nothing of his familiar garden landmarks. Everything was changed, strange, threatening. From somewhere in the night came another muffled crash, and the frantic inhuman screaming broke out once more. A shadow ran across the gray level at which Brickdale blankly stared—a shadow lipped with foam, which silently struck at him, splashing up the wall beneath him. He shrank back with a cry, turned, and stumbled to his door.

He flung it open. Instantly the dark of the closed house was full of a dozen voices that yet were one—the voice of running water. He felt again that he was going down in the hold of a sinking ship. Blind panic shut his throat. He managed to shout hoarsely for "Light! Light!"

A light answered him. March, the young groom, came down the attic stairs four at a time, carrying a lantern. In this hour of stunning unusualness Brickdale saw him for the first time as a man and not as a servant. He was in shirt and breeches, his hair rough, his feet bare and flashing white on the stairs. The dreadful screaming went on, piercing the dull sound of the rain and the flood as lightning rends a cloud. Brickdale ran to the groom. He said: "What is it? Oh, what is it?" March thrust him aside, saying only, "My horses!" He went past Brickdale in a flash to the lower hall. Brickdale heard him splashing in water. The lantern light danced on oily ripples where a Persian prayer rug floated grotesquely. Knee-high in water, March was struggling with the front door. His strained face looked back at Brickdale. He panted roughly, "Help—help me—you!"

Brickdale found himself tearing at the bolts beside March. The door came open at last, and the inrush of the flood water almost swept them off their feet, though both were big men. March panted: "It'll be the dam at Cedar Lake gone! Come to the stables! My horses—we must get the horses out!" Holding the lantern high, he thrust his other arm roughly through Brickdale's. They fought their way toward the stables.

The water drove at them out of the dark in ugly swirls, crested with drift. The rain hissed against the stable lantern. They moved in a narrow ring of light, and without was chaos and the voices of destruction. Twice Brickdale stumbled and would have fallen but for the hand gripping him. He was lost in body as well as mind. The very direction of his drowning house was gone from him. And the water was growing deeper.

The screaming of the horses was near them now. Brickdale felt concrete under his feet—blessedly solid. March pushed him up two steps and thrust the lantern into his hands.

"Hold it high," he commanded curtly, "and don't move. Keep right there or you'll be knocked down and tramped to pulp as they come out. I'm goin' to try and head 'em inland."

He left Brickdale and leaped to the door of the stables. His rough, strong young voice went before him, crying cheerily to the horses, "Steady, now, Paragon! Steady there, Pet! Quit that noise now! I'm comin' to you—I'm comin'!"

Brickdale thought the horses quieted at the voice. He was strangely struck by its beauty—the beauty of kindly strength. He felt also strangely alone and forgotten.

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MARCH had the door open and was in—at the risk of his life. The stables were between the river and the house, and the river wall was gone already, taking the chimney with it. The beasts were mad in their stalls. Brickdale, holding the lantern, nearly dropped it as Pet tore through the doorway and passed him in a storm of foam. He would not have recognized the sleek mare as she flashed by with foaming muzzle and flaring eyes. He heard the splash and thunder of her hoofs as she fled inland along his drowning terraces, and his breath drew cold. There were things in life——

Paragon, less maddened, was out, galloping for the higher fields. He also tore by, sending a great fan of water over Brickdale and the lantern, and beside him, holding to the straps, went March in long, flying leaps. He yelled something to Brickdale as he went past, but the words were lost. In the reeling lantern light Brickdale saw him swing himself incredibly to Paragon's broad back. His mind seized one picture that was to remain with him all his life—of the strong figure of his young groom in his drenched clothes astride the rearing horse. The horse and rider were gone into the night. Brickdale was left alone.

It was probably the first time in his life he had ever been alone. He did not like it. The bitter cold water was lipping at his knees as he stood on the steps, desperately hugging the lantern. He squattered down from the steps, and it rose mid-thigh. He was in soaked pajamas and was mortally cold. His soft, well-fed flesh quivered and crept from the water and the mire. He had his direction from the stables, though, and March had left him the lantern. He would go back to his house, get in the attic or on the roof and wait for the waters to subside.

He set off cautiously, holding the lantern high.

Things went past him in the narrow, glimmering circle. He saw small timbers, branches, trusses of hay, a dead sheep. He shrank rigidly from these things. Curious sucking, sliding noises were all about him. He saw a newly planted Japanese cherry tree heel over silently and drag away into the night. Strange things were underfoot, the very earth was turning fluid and running away. He slipped into a hollow and the cold water sprang to his heart. He gasped. Fighting his way up and out, he fancied hands clutching at the tail of his jacket to draw him down. He floundered on. But his sense of direction was at fault. Plunging forward, he suddenly plunged, as it were, over the edge of the earth.

He went down, clutching the extinguished lantern, came up choking, went down the second time before he came to his senses sufficiently to drop the lantern and strike out. He could swim a few strokes, but that was little use with the whole weight of the flooded river pressing on his chest. There in the dark and the flood he knew fear. He screamed as the horses had done. The waves and billows went over his soul. He fought on, struggling with the water.

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HE felt stones under his feet at last. He did not know that he had been struggling all the time with a friendly eddy under the bank of what had been his own vegetable garden, and that the eddy had at last succeeded in casting him ashore. He climbed, sobbing, through the slush and staggered away from the river. He was utterly lost. His one idea was to get to some dry spot of ground, if such remained in the universe, and lie down and die on it.

He thought that he staggered for many miles. He was aware at last of something great, a vaster shadow in the shadows, towering before him. He crept toward it. It was the great pine. He stumbled, sobbing, among the roots. A singular fragrance greeted him—the fragrance of warm, wet hens. Some few feet up in the gloom it was as if the ancient trunk had sprouted a huge black fungus. From under this fungus come a soft, droning voice.

Standing against the tree, Brickdale spoke faintly, "Larrabie!"

"Who be you?"

"It's me—Brickdale. For the sake of pity, give me a hand up. The flood's rising still, and I can't find my house. I'm all but dead."

There was a silence. Then:

"Wait till I fix the umbereller and clear these pesky fowls," came the serene old voice from the tree, "an' I'll be down right to you."

Brickdale broke down.

"God bless you, Larrabie!" he quavered. "You are a good man. I'm sorry I ever did a thing to you, Larrabie. I—where are you, Larrabie? Don't leave me here! The water's to my waist as I stand on the roots."

"Here I be! My hand's above you. You must come up higher, friend,' as Cousin Steve Larrabie's sister Jane ses when she was standin' on the stepladder an' the baker wanted ter kiss her. Put your foot on that old stump o' branch and jump when I give the word. Now!"

Brickdale jumped desperately. There was a scratching and clawing, an immense confusion of hens. Larrabie was hauling him upward. He sank at last on a wide bough with his back to the trunk. He was used up—done. He wondered vaguely if he were going to faint.

"Hold up, Brickdale. Don't ye give in, man. I got somethin' here'll fix you. Drat them fowls! They be all over me."

Brickdale sucked greedily at the bottle. Opening his eyes, he saw old Mason Larrabie's face near his own. He said weakly: "Will we be safe here?"

"Ye're quite safe here, Brickdale. Neither wind nor rain, frost nor flood 'll shake this tree. It's stood ten times the life o' such as we, Brickdale. It's rooted in the livin' rock. Slow as time, the years built it up. 'Tis only the years should break it down."

Brickdale bent his head. He stretched out his hand and touched the rough, scented bark against which he leaned. The great trunk was solid and reassuring as stone. He looked up to the dark boughs roofing him. He felt secure as if he had been suddenly gathered in some tremendous arm, laid to some vast breast. He touched Larrabie with the same trembling hand.

"It shall stand another hundred years," he mumbled. "D'you understand? I didn't. Forgive me, Larrabie. I'll never cut it down."

Larrabie did not answer directly. In a minute he said:

"Here's a blanket, Brickdale. I brought it up in case o' bein' here some while. Put it 'round yore shoulders."

Brickdale wrapped himself in silence. By and by he said humbly:

"Won't you share the blanket, Larrabie?"

The old man crept nearer to him. They huddled together for warmth. The hens made drowsy, throaty noises around them. Under them the flood rose; over them was the rain and the night. The slow hours seemed to drift past them palpably as the water did. Yet in the hold of the tree they were safe.

After a long time Brickdale said: "That the dawn, Larrabie?"

"Yes—like a rose. I been watchin' it. Many dawns I seen, but not so many as my tree! There's a voice cryin' on you somewhere."

Brickdale listened and then said: "It's young March," and called hoarsely in answer.

There was a sound of tearing branches. Poling a punt, March swung through the tops of the undergrowth toward the pine. His face glinted up at them whitely. He looked weary and spoke like a man in a dream.

"I come as soon as I could, sir—as soon as I got my horses safe."

Brickdale smiled faintly. March poled the boat under the pine and held it to the roots.

"If you drop sir," he said anxiously, "it's steady to ketch you. The horses is all right, sir, but Pet's cut hed hock an inch deep."

"That's all right," said Brickdale. "I'm glad to see you safe, March." He was descending stiffly and cautiously. "We'll all be the better for some dry clothes and some breakfast," he went on. "But as soon as we've put Mr. Larrabie ashore, March, we're comin' back—you an' me—an' we're going to pull out every strand and stake o' that wire fence we put in along the boundary line of my land. This tree stands on Mr. Larrabie's land, March—and don't you forget it!"

The sun cleared the heavy clouds and sent a shaft across the world that crowned with fire Larrabie's tree—the one unchanged thing in all the ravaged land.

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HE SEEMED TO BE ALWAYS BENEATH IT, HAGGARDLY WAITING FOR THE FINAL TRAGEDY.

Maryland Man Predicts Round-World Radio Talks

"THIS is Station LMB, Buckingham Palace. King George wishes to offer felicitations to the President of the United States on the occasion of his sixty-eighth birthday."

The President, seated in his office at the Executive Mansion, is handed the message a few seconds later by the White House radio receptionist. On such a day of personal felicitation, in view of the public interest the occasion demands, the President informs the "receptionist" he will personally receive all messages.

He adjusts the ear-piece of the radio outfit, conveniently placed on his desk.

"This is Station Oui, broadcasting from the foreign office, Paris, France. "The President of the French Republic speaking.

"May I extend, in the name of my countrymen, most hearty congratulations to the President of the United States on the occasion of his sixty-eighth birthday," etc.

"——, the Emperor of Japan speaking."

Outside the ether is surcharged with messages flowing back and forth from all corners of the world. The New York Stock Exchange is quoting cotton as it is being manipulated by the "Street" in London. An American fruit company is giving over the radio its order to a fruit grower in Greece for shipments of raisins.

What does all this mean?

It is a picture to be expected when radio transmission has reached its fullest development, according to Dr. James Harris Rogers, inventor, of Hyattsville, Md. He is the inventor of underground radio.

Round-the-world transmission is predicted by Dr. Rogers as the next development in radio. Out in his laboratory in Hyattsville he is working quietly and unostentatiously to accomplish this. In the same laboratory on his Hyattsville estate, where he heard with perfect distinctness German official reports on battles and on submarine operations long before the world knew of the success of his invention, Dr. Rogers is conducting further experiments and hopes to effect round-the-world transmission.

Using the underground antennae, which formed the basis of his war invention, he is making extensive tests in transmission, using wave lengths from 100 to 2,000 meters. In these tests the amount of energy being used in the antennae varies from 5 watts to 1,500 watts.

Capt. French, head of the radio division of the War Department, is intrested in the experiments and has extended every courtesy and co-operation at his command. He has furnished Dr. Rogers with a high-powered radio set.

What the inventor hopes to accomplish by these underground antennae is greater distances with the same amount of energy or power that is used in short-distance transmission, and the elimination of fading, and the difference in the strength of night and day transmission.

Few radio fans are aware of it, but there is a decided difference in the sound of radio messages between night and day. When elevated antennae are used for transmission the signals are very much louder at night than in the day. Dr. Rogers explained this phenomenon, or rather attributed it to the action of the sun. He believes that greater development underground, "where there is night all the time," will overcome this annoyance of the present radio development.

More than 50 inventions have been contributed to the world of science by the Hyattsville inventor. The submarine radio device used by the Navy during the war has just been credited to him. Dr. Rogers conducted most of his experiments on this device at the naval station at Key West, Fla. Probably the invention he has been best known for hitherto has been the invention of telegraphic printing. It may seem incredible now, but the printed telegram is only a recent development.

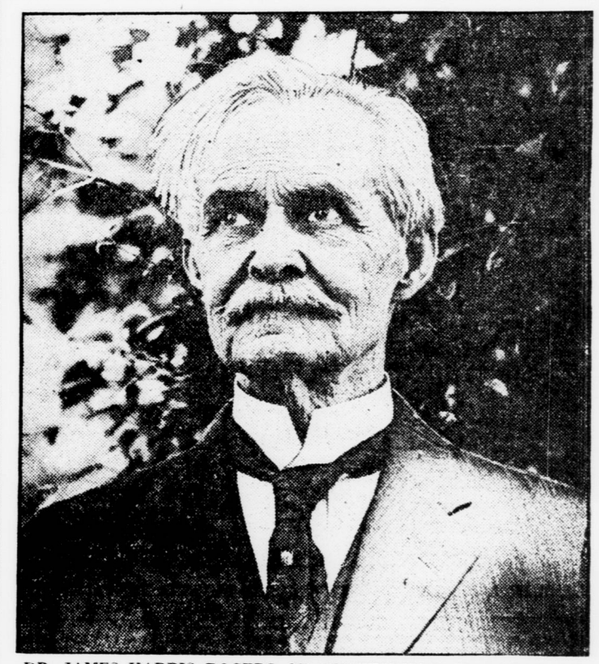
On March 14, 1895, the first printed telegraph letters were transmitted between Baltimore and Washington by his method.

Other inventions patented by Dr. Rogers were: Improved electric light, central telephone system, cylindrical automatic telegraphy, duplex and quadruplex telegraph, the thermotele meter, insulated submarine cable, an airplane, apparatus for producing high frequency oscillating current and automatic synchronism.

Dr. Rogers' greatest contribution to science and service to his country in war time.

Dr. Rogers may be found any day in his Hyattsville laboratory, at work. Radio fans will be much interested in his statement to the writer: "Round-the-world or long-distance radio transmission will bring about closer international relationship and the brotherhood of man, and will facilitate commerce."

When asked how long the development might take, he said: "I am working with that hope in view. I may not live to accomplish it, but I believe it will be only a question of time."



DR. JAMES HARRIS ROGERS OF HYATTSVILLE, INVENTOR OF THE SUBMARINE RADIO DEVICE.

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Preserving a Tree.

THE oldest oak tree in New Jersey, if not in the United States, is very expensive to preserve, according to the pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Basking Ridge. In his financial report at the celebration of the 204th anniversary of the founding of the church he said that the tree is 93 feet high and 23 feet in circumference and is 400 years old. It is decaying fast, and during the year three tons of concrete were needed to fill the cavities. Thirty-five cables were required to brace it. The labor, concrete and cables cost $3,393.08.

Sacred View.

THERE is only one spot in the Western Hemisphere where it is possible to view the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans at the same time. That is from the top peak of El Volcan, an extinct volcano rising 12,000 feet in Panama. The peak is regarded as holy ground by the Maya race of Indians, and but two white men have reached the top. Only one returned, John Q. Critchlow of Salt Lake City having the distinction of accomplishing the unique feat. Charles Brown disappeared and is supposed to have been killed by the Indians.

Electric Hatching.

MRS. SPARROW built her nest in the wire basket under an electric light at the Visalia, Calif., railroad station, laid her eggs, then hied forth to whatever pleasures she preferred—leaving heat of the electric light to finish what in olden days would have been her matronly duty. Eventually the little sparrows came forth, the father fed the birds and the mother came home—once in a while.